

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing the plurality of virtual communities, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and ~~[[a]]~~ the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

2. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing the plurality of virtual communities, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator, and

display means for displaying a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [[a]] the second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 2, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein said message subscription type setting means sets a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports

knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

community processing means for managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post the reply email message to the second virtual community by replying to a new posting.

7. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

message subscription type setting means for setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

community processing means for managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual

communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

8. (Original) A system according to claim 6, wherein said reply message processing means further automatically determines a topic to which the reply message should belong.

9. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the method comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type

allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

10. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, the method comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator, and

a display step of displaying a window comprising a list of the virtual community and [[a]] the second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first

subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the message subscription type setting step includes the step of setting a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

15. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, comprising:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong

by analyzing a subject of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

16. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the reply message processing means includes the step of further automatically determining a topic to which the reply message should belong.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

18. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge

accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted to the plurality of virtual communities from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator, and

a display step of displaying a window comprising a list of the virtual community and [[a]] the second virtual community, the displayed window indicating the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

19. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong

by analyzing a message header of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.

20. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium that stores a program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a plurality of virtual communities, the plurality of virtual communities comprising at least a first virtual community and a second virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message;

a message subscription type setting step of setting a first subscription type for the first virtual community, the first subscription type indicating the way a user

subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from the user; and

a community processing step of managing the plurality of virtual communities, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the plurality of virtual communities, from the client terminals, the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, the community processing step including:

a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply email message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to an email message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply email message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message,

wherein one of the plurality of client terminals displays a window comprising a list of the first virtual community and [a]] the second virtual community, and

wherein the displayed window indicates the first subscription type is browsing by a web browser for the first virtual community, and indicates a second subscription type is using an email client for the second virtual community, the second subscription type allowing a user to post a reply to the second virtual community by replying to a delivered email message containing a new posting.